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## Department of Defense Response

The Department of Defense responded to the earthquake even before the disaster declaration. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney activated the Directorate of Military Support (DOMS), a group of officers in the Pentagon who coordinate the military's response to a civilian disaster. The Secretary of the Army—the Defense Department's executive agent for support to FEMA during a disaster—advised the director of military support, Major General James D. Smith, to activate a joint task force to coordinate, manage, and task all Department of Defense support to FEMA. Army officials initiated a DOMS crisis response cell in the Army Operations Center at 9:15 P.M. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on 17 October. The DOMS crisis response cell alerted all nearby Army, Navy, and Air Force aviation (helicopter), engineer, and medical units to be ready to provide support. A full joint task force met for the first time at 7:00 A.M. the next morning. The Secretary of the Army directed the commanders of the major military commands to coordinate Department of Defense disaster assistance in their respective geographical areas of responsibility. The commander of the U.S. Army Forces Command (FORSCOM) was designated as the supported commander and all other Department of Defense commanders-in-chief were designated supporting commanders.<sup>10</sup>

General Smith sent an execution order to FORSCOM indicating that because the President had signed a disaster declaration, Department of Defense could use its resources on both public and private lands to perform work that the FEMA federal coordinating officer requested. He directed FORSCOM to plan for and conduct disaster support operations in the areas of responsibility. FORSCOM would appoint a Department of Defense military representative as a disaster control officer. As the single point of contact for the federal coordinating officer, this person would coordinate all FEMA mission assignments for military assistance. The FORSCOM commander designated Major General Todd P. Graham,

deputy commander of Sixth Army, as the disaster control officer for the earthquake.<sup>11</sup>

Sixth Army, headquartered in the Presidio overlooking San Francisco Bay, spearheaded the Army's response. The commanding general of Sixth Army is responsible for responding to federal disasters in 12 western states. As regional Department of Defense executive agent, Sixth Army's responsibilities included the urban search and rescue mission (ESF #9) if required. When the tremors began, Colonel Albert E. Carlson, the deputy chief of staff for operations at Sixth Army, hurried down the stairs to the emergency operations center (EOC) in the basement of the headquarters building. The center, already fully staffed and operational because it was participating in a mobilization exercise, shifted its efforts from running the exercise to handling earthquake requests.<sup>12</sup>

Within minutes, Sixth Army staff reestablished telephone communications and began calling in additional critical personnel. A Sixth Army liaison was already en route to the California Office of Emergency Services (OES) in Sacramento. Navy and Air Force liaisons were already present in the emergency operations center and other liaisons would arrive later. Carlson observed that if Sixth Army staff had not been in the midst of an exercise, it would not have been as proficient as it was. He acknowledged some glitches in the response that would have been more difficult to smooth out if the right people had not been there for the exercise.

Carlson and his staff soon were joined by Tommie Hamner, who was locked out of his own headquarters building across the parade grounds at the Presidio. Sixth Army temporarily provided Hamner with a desk and phone so he could begin his operations.<sup>13</sup>

Sixth Army geared up for its urban search and rescue mission. Its fire trucks were among the first on the scene in the Marina district. Sixth Army also sent military police to help civilian police direct traffic so they could get the fire trucks through. Nine military police from the Presidio immediately assisted with local traffic control, while other military police provided support to urban search and rescue. The Presidio furnished bedding and light sets to the city of San Francisco. Sixth Army compiled lists of available disaster assistance equipment from all military services and later

deployed three people to FEMA's disaster field office as logistical liaisons. It provided six helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft to provide airlift assistance, which included special missions for the Corps of Engineers. By 30 October, over 800 active duty Army soldiers had participated in disaster relief operations.<sup>14</sup>

Other services, particularly the Navy and Marines, also played key roles in the response effort. Navy ships in San Francisco Bay helped fight fires in the city and supplied heavy equipment to aid in rescue efforts on collapsed freeways in Oakland. The USS *Lang*, moored in San Francisco Harbor, provided steam services for power generation to the city utility company. The USS *Gray*, also in the harbor, provided electrical services to Pacific Gas and Electric to support damage control in the Marina district. The USS *Kansas City* and USS *Flint* were also in San Francisco Bay with helicopter detachments on standby. The USS *Texas* provided communications coordination for the bay area.

Personnel from the Treasure Island Naval Station helped evacuate people from the Oakland Bay Bridge and provided emergency food and shelter for people trapped on the bridge. Alameda Naval Air Station provided construction battalion personnel and equipment to support rescue operations on the collapsed section of I-880.<sup>15</sup> On 20 October, the *Pelilieu* traveled to San Francisco Bay to assist in the recovery. The Marine Air Group 42, stationed at the Alameda Naval Air Station, provided air lift for personnel and equipment. By 23 October, the Navy had committed 15 ships to the earthquake recovery operations. In addition, 18 aircraft and 35 ships provided assistance. Sailors and marines from the *Pelilieu*, *Fort Fisher*, and *Schenectady* performed various tasks ranging from making lunches for relief workers to transporting fresh water into Santa Cruz. The Navy provided large tents with generators and lighting for use by rescue workers on I-880. Volunteers from the *Gompers* helped the Red Cross evaluate structural damage to buildings in Oakland.

Beginning on 25 October, 25 marines from the *Pelilieu* assisted with traffic control during rush hour at the Port of San Francisco. The 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit furnished 121 marines to help remove downed trees and clear

roads near Soquel Valley, California. Marine personnel established a backup communications net for FEMA at its disaster field office, and four marines were detailed to the Presidio to provide administrative support for FEMA.<sup>16</sup>

The Air Force responded along with the other services. California's Office of Emergency Services established a medical staging area at Travis Air Force Base and a disaster support area at Mather Air Force Base. The Air Force provided aerial reconnaissance support from Beale Air Force Base.<sup>17</sup>

Roughly 900 displaced persons were sheltered in Department of Defense facilities: 300 aboard the *Pelilieu* and 600 more at the Presidio in the Golden Gate Reserve Center and in renovated barracks. On 27 October, the displaced men aboard the *Pelilieu* were transferred to an onshore Red Cross center. On 30 November, the last 103 people sheltered at the Presidio were relocated to other Red Cross shelters off the installation.<sup>18</sup>

The California National Guard also contributed greatly to the response. Within an hour of the earthquake, the California Air National Guard's 129th Air Rescue and Recovery Group, based at the Moffett Field Naval Air Station near San Jose, had its first HC-130 Hercules transport conducting a damage assessment over the San Francisco Bay area. By 6:00 P.M. every National Guard unit in California had been put on alert for possible state active duty.

The California Army National Guard operated a helicopter detachment from the Alameda Naval Air Station. On 18 October, DOMS reported 1,050 California guardsmen were on state active duty performing earthquake recovery operations. Their missions included medical evacuation, aerial observation and damage surveys, air transportation, and engineer support. Their equipment included 4 C-130 cargo aircraft and 12 helicopters.<sup>19</sup>

The California National Guard formed two task forces in expectation of receiving missions from the California Office of Emergency Services. The Guard assisted primarily in the areas of aviation support to law enforcement and damage assessment operations. By 23 October, only 119 soldiers remained on state active duty with the California National Guard.<sup>20</sup>